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ABSTRACT

As part of the national campaign of the American Nurses Association (ANA) to create two levels of nursing, one for bachelor of science nurses (BSN's) and one for associate degree nurses (ADN's), Illinois has been targeted for a legislative push to change the laws governing nurse licensure, which, if successful, would signal the beginning of the end of associate degree nursing in its present form. The President's Council in Illinois has recognized the critical nature of the coming fight over the law on licensure and has been actively engaged in designing an agenda of activities for implementation against the ANA's proposals. On the local level, support is being secured from ADN directors and faculty, local hospitals and nursing homes; the success of ADN programs is being publicized; and community groups are being mobilized in support of ADN programs. On the state level, the Coalition for the Preservation of the Current Nurse Practice Act has been organized to apply pressure on state legislators. On the national level, ANA activities are being monitored, information is being shared with other groups involved in the same fight, and the ANA is being challenged to produce facts and figures to support its position. (EJV)

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Strategies for Maintaining Associate Degree Nursing Programs

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Remarks of Ted Tilton
Provost, Main Campus
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in a discussion on
"Strategies for Maintaining Associate Degree Nursing Programs"
at the 66th Annual Meeting of the
American Association of Community and Junior Colleges
at
Orlando, Florida

I am happy to be here this afternoon sharing a platform with Geraldine Evans, Carol Casten, and Howard Ponitz, in a discussion on strategies for maintaining Associate Degree Nursing Programs in community and junior colleges.

As Gerri said, my portion of the discussion concerns the role of the community college president in this fight.

We all know the old management theory which states that any executive can solve any problem by adopting the Truman Doctrine: "The buck stops here!" and then taking full control of the resolution of the problem.

Or the opposite theory, which says: "Delegate! Delegate! Delegate! Someone is sure to do the work!"

However, as our speakers have demonstrated, the problem of preserving associate degree nursing is one that is going to require more than a community college president acting on his or her own, or on the president delegating the work to someone else. It is going to require the work and support of all segments of the community college. Students, faculty, and administrators, and the support of many elements of the community, if we are to be successful.

We in Illinois have been especially active in this fight to preserve associate degree nursing because Illinois is the prime battleground for the nation. As part and parcel of the national campaign of the American Nurses Association to create two levels of nursing, one for BSNs, and one for ADNs, Illinois has been targeted by the ANA as the first big state within which to make a legislative push to change the laws governing licensure. To supplement tens of thousands of dollars previously spent by the American Nurses Association and the Illinois Nurses Association on their campaign to change the Illinois Law, ANA recently agreed to spend an additional $160,000 during the years 1986 and 1987 in Illinois. We must be aware of the fact that a change in licensure law in the State of Illinois will signal the beginning of the end of associate degree nursing as we presently know it.

Our President's Council in Illinois has long recognized the critical nature of the coming fight over changing the law on licensure and has been actively engaged in designing an agenda of activities for implementation on the local, state, and national levels, to meet the challenge of the ANA. We are moving forward on a number of fronts. I shall briefly describe what we are doing in Illinois, and what we plan to do within the next few months, as indicative of what the president's role in this fight can and should be. Of one thing we in Illinois are certain: We cannot sit back in our presidential chairs and let nature take its course!

On the local level in Illinois: At each college we are securing the support of the ADN Director and the ADN faculty for our fight in opposition to the ANA proposal. Through special meetings and letters we are impressing upon our ADN faculty the fact that the ANA proposal poses a dire threat to the future existence of our local ADN programs and the individual jobs of our ADN faculty.

We are contacting ADN alumni and presently enrolled students to alert them to the danger which the ANA proposal represents to their future as registered nurses, and to their future earning capacities, and requesting their support in opposition to the ANA proposal.

We are contacting local hospitals, nursing homes, and other health care facilities, which are presently employing our ADN graduates, we well as using our students in their clinical sites, and soliciting their support in opposition to the ANA proposal.

We are publicizing the success of our local ADN programs by issuing press releases on our ADN programs, emphasizing the number of our graduates who are successfully practicing nursing in the local area, and the individual success stories of our ADN graduates.

We are contacting our local elected officials and legislators to secure their support in opposition to the ANA proposal. We are sharing with these public officials the facts and figures on the drastic effects the ANA proposal will have upon the quality and cost of health care in the local area, as well as in the nation.

We are contacting local pressure groups, such as senior citizens organizations, minority group organizations, and advocates for welfare or Medicare groups, to inform them on how ADN graduates serve the needs of the community and the needs of their special interest group. We are soliciting their support in opposition to the ANA proposal. We are organizing letter writing campaigns for letters to be written to members of the state legislature in opposition to any change in the present Illinois licensure law for registered nurses.

On the state level in Illinois: We have organized The Coalition for the Preservation of the Current Nurse Practice Act. This group is to be the focal point of our statewide efforts against the ANA proposal.

We are preparing a "Fact Sheet" on the key facts and issues of the fight to maintain the present licensure act which we will give the widest distribution throughout the State of Illinois.

We are planning a comprehensive program of statewide activities to last for one week during Fall in celebration of Associate Degree Nursing and Practical Nursing.

We are contacting our local state legislators, and as many other state legislators as possible, to lobby directly and by mail in opposition to any proposal to change the present licensure law.

We are submitting letters to appropriate legislative committees and requesting the opportunity to personally appear and testify before any legislative committee in opposition to any change in the licensure law.

We are organizing a Network Committee to coordinate our activities with those of other organizations and groups in opposition to the ANA proposal.

On the national level: We are monitoring events in other states where ANA has previously tried to change the law, or where ANA plans to act next. We are exchanging information with other community colleges, organizations, and groups, which are engaged in the same fight.

We are seeking support from AACJC for a national position statement in opposition to the ANA proposal.

We are challenging the leadership of the ANA to support the rhetoric of their position by producing facts and figures, rather than platitudes and generalities on the necessity, or the projected benefits to the profession of nursing, the national health care delivery system, and the nation as a whole, to be derived from adoption of their proposal.

We are continuing to press the leadership of the National League for Nursing for clarification of their position on the basic issues. Frankly, our patience has been exhausted by the various "Interpretative Statements" from the NLN which seek to explicate, clarify, and elaborate upon their intent. In the words of Old Joe Cannon, speaker of the House of Representatives around the turn of the century, "You are either with us, or you are a'gin us!" And the NLN, by its statements is clearly not with us, so it must be a'gin us!

I say that the NLN is against us because they have performed so many flip-flops on the issues of entry into practice and nursing licensure, that it is difficult to determine from one day to the next exactly which side of the fence the NLN is on!

In the words of the Happy Warrior, Al Smith, "Let us look at the record!" In February 1984, the NLN in its "Position Paper on Nursing Licensure," said

> "The National League for Nursing believes that this current nursing licensure system adequately enforces the standards for safe practice and that public harm is not a potential problem under the current system. Additional qualifications of practitioners should be recognized by other credentialing mechanisms such as certification." [Emphasis added.]

In November 1984, the Liaison Committee of the AACJC and the NLN, said:

> "Competency attained beyond the registered nurse level should be assured through additional credentialing mechanisms." [Emphasis added.]

In April 1985, the same Liaison Committee endorsed the above statement, and opened its statement with these words:

> "The Liaison Comittee continues to oppose a dual level of licensure for nurses as proposed by the American Nurses Association." [Emphasis added.]

And then in October 1985 the NLN performed a complete turn-around, when it adopted the following motion:

> "The NLN supports two levels of nursing practice, professional and associate. Further, NLN supports the councils working closely with ANA Cabinets to help define the scope and practice within these levels."

Is there any wonder that the National League for Nursing felt compelled to issue its "Interpretative Statemen)," on February 1986?

Trying to understand the twists and turns of the NLN statements on entry into nursing pracrice and licensure is a little like poor Alice in Wonderland trying to get Humpty-Dumpty to give her straight answers! You will recall Humpty-Dumpty said, "When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean, neither more nor less!" And when the National League for Nursing issues statements they can only be understood by a skilled metaphysician! A metaphysician, as old Baron Bowen of Colwell defined him, was someone who goes into a dark cellar at midnight, without a light, looking for a black cat, that isn't there! Well I, for one, am

tired of looking for that black cat in statements from the NLN!

I do not wish our Associate Degree Nursing Programs to be subject to, and again quoting from the latest NLN "Interpretative Statement":

One, A "Licensure yet to be stipulated and a scope of practice yet to be established."

Two, A domain and scope of practice which "Will evolve from continuing assessments, and from existing and emerging studies," and

Three, Nor do I want NLN to provide "Leadership within nursing education for remapping the education system to establish a foundation for successful transition to a two level structure."

I may have strayed a little afield from my subject of defining the president's role in this fight, but I do think that we have come to the parting of the road in our association with the National League for Nursing. The NLN says it wants to help us resolve the issues of entry into practice and licensure. However, in many ways it is like old Judge Roy Bean, the famous law west of the Pecos. He always wanted to help the defendants in his courtroom. The only problem was that Judge Roy Bean had already decided that the defendants were guilty and, therefore, the only way the judge could help was in making it a hanging or a shooting! Well we know that Associate Degree Nursing Education is alive and well! And we are not prepared to permit the NLN to assist the ANA in planning our demise!

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